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METHODS OF STRENGTHENING RURAL STATISTICAL WORK IN CHINA

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Summary: Although preliminary successes have been won in rural statistical work, there are still several weaknesses. Statistical workers must have the proper attitudes in regard to their work, dissimilar conditions must be taken into consideration, wider samplings must be made, and promptness and accuracy are desired. To strengthen the statistical work, better planning is needed, key-point inspections should be made, and capitalist theories and methods should be abolished.

A. Statistical Investigation in 1952

Statistical investigation has progressed in the past year. An intelligent definition of basic rural conditions has been made, and the control of all types of material and resources, such as the cultivated area, farm population, man and animal power, production skill, crop production, number of animals, marine products, etc., has been improved. In 1952, the Northeast has already conducted two over-all investigations. The provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Honan and provinces of the Southeast have also carried out relatively large-scaled over-all investigations. Many administrative areas, provinces, and hsien have completed key-point inspections.

A preliminary statistical system has emerged. During the past year, new statistical units have been set up or special representatives sent out to make investigations. In varying degrees some order has been brought out of chaotic conditions.

In North China and in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, statistical work is under the immediate direction of the Central People's Government. In the other administrative areas statistical conferences for cadres have been held on all levels and coordinated instructions on statistical procedures have been issued. The purpose of these activities is to standardize rural statistical report forms which in the past have been issued in wide variety by various political subdivisions. Experience begins to make it clear that statistical reports should be the servant and not the master of the cadres charged with planning responsibilities.

B. Problems and Shortcomings

There is still a wide discrepancy in the attainments of various provinces. Some officials still do not regard statistics as important. Lateness of land reform has delayed progress in other areas.

The great variety of climatic conditions in China makes it impossible for the same type of crop information to be filled out simultaneously in all places. Methods must be devised to provide for seasonal variations. Report blanks frequently need better explanations than they now carry of the method of filling them out.

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Many statistical workers slavishly follow the minute details of the report blanks, details of which frequently cannot be furnished by the farmers. For instance, the report on number of domestic animals carries ten items. Others are likewise detailed. The statistical worker must consider these blanks on the basis of a few items that are really important. The basis of all dependable correlations and analysis of statistical reports is the accuracy of information. Hence statistical workers must make careful field checks to verify statistical information. If this is neglected, no amount of study in an office can guarantee accuracy of results.

Some statistical workers do not seek dependable results in their investigations and even try to cover up real conditions by juggling figures in making computations.

Other statisticians are content with limited samplings and try to secure averages from noncomparable and unrelated categories. They indulge in capitalistic methods.

### C. Problems Involved in Strengthening Rural Statistical Work

There is need for immediate basic strengthening of rural statistical work by well-planned definite progression from the simple to the more complicated. In provinces where a good foundation has been laid, systems should be stabilized, investigations deepened, and a better quality of economic analysis developed. Furthermore, Soviet methods and theories should be carefully studied.

In the present situation, the following steps must be taken.

1. Take into consideration local conditions, financial, trade, and civil administrations should be coordinated in detailed investigations of land area, cultivated area, members of households, manpower and animal power, and production of all crops. This is important and should be resolutely carried out. Experience has taught that where the government functions have been well established, basic statistical work can proceed, but only after careful organizational and educational activities. Experience in the Northeast has revealed that spot sampling is not sufficient. To get dependable results, statistical work must be carried out everywhere.
2. Make prompt and accurate periodic reports on general agricultural production and state farm operations.
3. Emphasize key-point inspections in present agricultural investigations. Because an over-all investigation requires much manpower, it is neither feasible nor necessary to institute such a program at this time. The items covered by key-point inspections should be governed by the local conditions. Based on the present needs of agricultural production, the following items should be included: production norms, changes in class status, organization, income and expenditures of agricultural households, food waste, rural consumption of goods, animal survival rate, surplus or shortage of manpower and animal power, rural purchasing power, supply and demand for production materials, production costs for important crops, secondary industries, and the latent capabilities of agricultural production.
4. Initiate all types of organized and systematic investigations of resources such as water conservation, fallow land, etc.

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5. Develop economic analysis work. The study of statistics is the scientific research into the changes from the quantitative to the qualitative. Statistical work must be based on the economic content of reports together with analytical research in order to discover the trends of economical development. Reports are methods of investigating problems; they are the means by which economic development is studied. The economic content of reports are analyzed, the actual facts are extracted and they become the guiding principles of economic construction. This is the final goal and basic responsibility of statistical work.

6. Abolish all capitalist theories of statistics, and strengthen practical and theoretical statistical work.

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